वर्क आउट हो रहे हैं, लेकिन हम इसमें राहत देंगे, जो गरीब वर्ग हैं, उसको हम राहत देंगे ताकि बैंक्स और कम दरों पर तथा फाइनेंशियल इंस्टीट्यूशन्स और कम दरों पर गरीब लोगों को लोन दे सकें।

SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Sir, the hon. Minister, in the earlier question, mentioned about slum re-development. The city from which I come, Dharavi, is the largest slum in Asia. Is the hon. Prime Minister going to take some initiative in improving the Slum Development Policy for Maharashtra specifically?

KUMARI SELJA: Sir, as I said, slum development is a State subject, and they have to come up with their own policy. Though the Government of India is also contemplating that, but, Sir, I will request the hon. Member to put another question at some other time on slums.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question.

Rural business hubs

*605. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:†
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) the action plan of Government to set up rural business hubs to improve the economy of the rural India;

(b) the status of Orissa State in development of such hubs in the backward region; and

(c) to what extent this initiative would control rural influx to urban sector?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The 73rd Constitutional Amendment, 1992, has mandated Panchayats as Institutions of Self Government, to plan and implement programmes of economic development and social justice. The Action Plan of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in respect of Rural Business Hubs was set in June 2004, by the Hon'ble Prime Minister's very first Conference of Chief Ministers on the subject "Poverty Alleviation and Rural Prosperity through Panchayati Raj". He said that "Panchayati Raj is the medium to transform rural India

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Ms. Pramila Bohidar.

into 700 million opportunities. The key instrument for integrating economic reforms with institutional reforms in the countryside is Gandhiji's far-sighted goal of Poorna Swaraj through Gram Swaraj".

Towards this end, a National Presentation on Rural Business Hubs was held in November 2004, attended by 1000 PRI representatives, and 250 respresentatives of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII). The Ministry and the CII set up a joint RBH Council, under the Co-Chairmanship of the Minister for Panchayati Raj and the then President of the CII. The Minister of State for Commerce kindly agreed to serve as Vice-Chairman. Counterpart State RBH Councils have been set up in 15 States. The objective of the RBH initiative is to promote at least one RBH in each development block of the country by bringing to the attention of business houses, in both the public and private sectors, the unique product or skill in each development block deriving from local resource endowments, felt needs of the people and relative absorptive capacity of the local community. In consultation with State Governments and the Panchayats, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has identified the local resource and skill endowment across some 850 blocks. Ministry of Panchayati Raj is attempting, in this manner, to develop and promote the 4 Ps, that is, Public-Private-Panchayat Partnerships into Rural Business Hubs through a governance relationship between the rural enterpreneur, the business partner and the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The role of the Panchayat is to facilitate the convergence of extant schemes of State and Central Governments, together with initiatives of banks, financing institutions, and promotional bodies. This will help develop holistic and integrated partnerships between decentralized rural production units, and larger corporate entities.

Further, the Ministry has collated the schemes of a host of Central Ministries, including Food Processing Industries/Agro and Rural Industries and Small Industries/Commerce and Industries/Textiles/Non-Conventional Energy Sources/Power/Petroleum and Natural Gas which could be converged for setting up RBHs. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission and the Export Promotion Councils have been approached to converge their programmes with the RBHs. Institutions such as NABARD and SIDBI have also been mobilized to promote institutional convergence. The Ministry has widened its ambit of interaction on RBHs to the Junior Chamber International, the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Southern Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Both FICCI and ASSOCHAM have expressed interest in associating with the RBH initiative.

So far, 97 MoUs have been entered into by business enterprises with PRIs in such diverse fields as fruit processing, power generation and distribution, Jetropha bio-fuels, handicrafts, carpet weaving, stone carving, etc. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is attempting, through RBH, to catch up with and overtake China's Township and Village Enterprises and Thailand's OTOP (One Tambon-One Product). In view of the successful involvement of Japanese External Trade Organisation (JETRO) in OTOP, discussions for collaboration between JETRO and CII have also been initiated.

(b) There are no Rural Business Hubs (RBH) functioning as yet in the State of Orissa.

(c) There is a steady influx of rural people to urban areas in search of employment and economic opportunity. Also, there is a wide gap between rural and urban areas in terms of public services like health and education, in the quality of life and levels of income. This gap is perceived to be widening. This led the Hon'ble Prime Minister to observe at the National Presentation on Rural Business Hubs on 8th November, 2004, that "the benefits of rapid economic growth, unleashed through the reforms of the last two decades, need to flow to all sections of society, particularly to rural India... If we have to ensure inclusive and equitable growth, we need to knit and integrate our rural areas into the modern economic processes that are rapidly transforming our country. We cannot allow India to be divided into two distinct zones, a modern, competitive, prosperous one and the other a stagnant, backward one".

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has adopted the goal of "*Haat to Hypermarket*" as the overarching objective of the Rural Business Hubs (RBH), initiative aimed at moving from mere livelihood support to promoting rural prosperity, increasing rural non-farm incomes and augmenting rural employment. We believe that if the individual families and Self-Help Groups in rural India begin to develop rural entrepreneurship through the intermediation of democratic institutions of governance at the grassroots, that is, the Panchayats, then the improvement in living conditions in rural areas and the closing of the rural-urban gap might be expected to moderate the pace of migration to urban areas. RBHs set up in association with

PRIs could thus constitute the fulcrum of "inclusive growth"—the theme of the Approach to the Eleventh Plan.

MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has plans to develop rural business hubs. If so, what are the core areas identified to be taken up by Gram Panchayats for employment creation and income generation? I would also like to know whether the Government has plans to set up consumer redressal cells at block and sub-division levels.

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, with regrard to redressal systems for consumer complaints, it is really another Ministry which has to set it up. The Panchayats would be more than ready to take up the responsibility in that regard.

With respect to the Rural Business Hubs, which was the primary question posed by the hon. Member, I would say that the essence of the RBH concept is that since the Panchayats are the institutions of governance at the grassroots, we would request larger corporate entities to enter into a governance relationship with the Panchayats and Panchayats, in turn, mobilise and bring together decentralised production units, whether these are in the shape of Self Help Groups or individuals or other small entities. And they have to so synergise the relationship between the decentralised production unit and the market, that instead of the output of the SHGs being limited to the local area or at the most going up to a nearby town, they are able to reach the entire world market. That is why in the last paragraph of my reply I have given this. We have told you that our overarching objective in running Rural Business Hubs is to take the produce from the *Haat to Hypermarket*. And, to promote this, we need an integrated business relationship between the corporate and the decentralised production unit, intermediated by the Panchayats to ensure that the terms of the bargain are fair, it is in this light that we have so far signed 97 Memorandum of Understandings relating to this kind of Rural Business Hubs.

MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR: Sir, my second supplementary is this. I would like to know whether the Government has plans to promote and popularise marketing of some fruits and vegetables; products of the global market, which are in great demand.

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Yes, Sir. I am glad to report that there are some major corporates, who are in this particular area of work and have indicated to us their interest in picking up fresh fruits and vegetables and also to enter into some processing arrangements, if this is required to be able to market them. But for all this, we need a much more enthusiastic participation of State Governments. And with respect to the State from which the hon. Member is, I have to say with some sorrow in my voice that although we have set up the RBH Council in Orissa with the Minister of Panchayati Raj as the Chairperson as long ago as August 2006, till today, we have not yet received a single specific proposal. I personally visited Bhubaneshwar and spoke to the Confederation of Indian Industries, Bhubaneshwar unit about these matters. It looked, at that time in June, that we would be getting proposals. But the corporate sector is simply not coming forward as enthusiastically as this country needs. And, therefore, I would appeal to the corporate sector to be much more forthcoming in this regard.

SHRI B.J. PANDA: Sir, the hon. Minister has stated in his answer that his Ministry has collated the schemes of a host of Central Ministries, including the food processing industries, agro industries, etc. The fact remains that despite all these host of schemes, one of the most critical areas which is the promotion of cold storage chains for encouraging storage, and, then forward sales of rural produce, fruits etc. is not seeing much development. Would the hon. Minister undertake to prioritise cold storage schemes under RBHs and formulate means of encouraging these to come up faster?

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, the RBH Council, which we have set up at the National Council, has as its Vice-Chairman, the hon. Minister of State for Commerce who is sitting here with us. Thanks to his very active involvement in the RBH initiative; he has promised that in the North East, Particularly, there will be cold storages at no less than five airports with the cold chain going backwards. Also, all the subsidies and the schemes that are available for cold storages under the Ministry of Commerce would be automatically and necessarily available to any RBH that is based on that. So, I would, particularly, request the hon. Member—he himself is a distinguished corporate giant—to kindly encourage our RBHs by taking advantage of Shri Jai Ram Ramesh's schemes and coming in with relationships that take industry to the people instead of limiting it to a few.

KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Sir, to stop migration to cities, a multi-pronged strategy is needed. So, what role the panchayats are going to play in stopping migration from the rural to the urban areas?

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, I don't think the experience of other countries or our own would indicate that we can ever stop such migrations, but we can moderate it. To moderate it, what is necessary is to buckle the rural hinterland with the urban manufacturing centre, and, that is precisely the objective of the Rural Business Hubs. We have had a measure of success so far, but as these MoUs are at an early stage of implementation, I think an independent evaluation would have to be undertaken after a certain amount of time to see as to what extent we have been able to at least moderate the huge migration that is taking place from the rural India to the metropolitan centres. Perhaps, it would not matter so much if the migrations were from the rural hinterland to the immediately near urban centres.

FDI in cruise shipping space

*606. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE:†
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the draft policy, prepared by a steering group headed by the Shipping and Tourism Ministers has been considered by the Committee of Secretaries for approval of the Central Government;

(b) if so, whether the policy seeks to encourage foreign direct investment in cruise shipping space;

(c) if so, the other main aims of the policy;

(d) whether Government have approved the same; and

(e) by what time it is likely to be announced?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) 100% FDI is already permitted in the shipping sector.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shrimati Supriya Sule.